

## Homily -- 17th Sunday OT; B-cycle

A disgruntled pig once approached the cow on the farm where they lived, and asked him,

“Why is it people like you more than me?

Everyone speaks warmly of your gentle nature and sorrowful eyes.

They think you’re generous because you give them milk and cream everyday.

But what about me? I give them everything that I have! I give bacon and ham.

I provide bristles for brushes. They even pickle my feet!

Yet no one likes me? Why is that?”

The cow answered, “Because you only give when you’ve died. I give while I’m living.”

The generosity of God. Have you ever noticed when God gives, he gives big?

He gives abundantly. He gives overwhelmingly.

He gives more than we could ever need.

Jesus gave everything he had to us, right down to his life, right down to his own flesh and blood.

But he didn’t wait until he died to give us the abundance of his grace.

While he was living, he gave us his word now recorded in Scripture.

He gave us his teaching to live by. He gave us his apostles, the priesthood.

He gave us his mother, Mary. He gave us his bride, the Church.

And he gave us miracles, like the one we heard today.

With the exception of raising Lazarus from the dead, and Jesus’ own resurrection, this miracle we heard today, the multiplying of the loaves and fish, is probably the most dramatic of all Jesus’ miracles. Why? Because there were so many witnesses.

The scriptures tell us there were five thousand men in that crowd.

The evangelists didn’t count women and children.

So if we can figure one woman for every man, and two children for every pair of adults, which is being generous, because Jewish families of this time were traditionally much bigger, we can estimate about

twenty thousand people were in that crowd. And they all got fed.  
They all got fed with an abundance left over. Twelve baskets!  
Have you ever had a thanksgiving dinner, where there was so much left over you  
ate any number of turkey and stuffing dinners every day for a week?  
That's how much was left over!  
Just like the wedding at Cana, where Jesus changed water into wine, because the  
wine was running out.  
Jesus didn't make enough wine just to get them through the celebration.  
He makes an abundance of wine that they were probably drinking months later.  
When God gives he gives big!

Now if anyone is thinking, "Well that's just not true Father. Because I asked God for something once and never got it!" My response to that is, what were asking for?

You were asking for something to glorify yourself, or something to glorify the Lord? My response to that is, how did you ask for it?

Jesus is a gentleman and forces himself on no one.

When I was in my first year at seminary I was having a particularly hard time in one of my classes.

So instead of studying for the midterm exam I said, "No, I'm going to put my trust in God.

I'm going to pray in the chapel that the Lord give me the knowledge I need to get a good grade on my exam and I'm going to bed."

And do you know happened? *I flunked!!* I had to take the exam over again!

Trusting the Lord does not justify laziness!

The Lord waits for us to take a step toward him. We are not to be just passive prayers.

We are not just to passively sit in pews once a week.

We must be actively seeking the Lord, every day, all of our lives.

Let's look at our gospel today.

Before Jesus works this miracle, someone makes an act of faith. The little boy.

It took a little boy to offer what he had, five barley loaves and a couple dried fish.  
Maybe this boy was on his way home from the market, when in curiosity he  
started following the crowd into the wilderness.

Maybe it was the lunch his mother had packed for his older brothers working the  
fields, that this youngest son was to deliver.

We don't know. The scriptures don't tell us.

But we know out of this immense crowd, that small boy is the only one who  
makes a step of faith, and offers everything he has.

And look what the Lord does with it.

Could Jesus have worked that miracle without the boy? Sure.

Could he have worked the miracle without the five loaves and fish to start with?

Of course. But Jesus waits for someone to step out in faith.

My mother is no theologian. My mother has a very simple faith. She never went to  
college. She's worked most of her life. But my Mom can knit.

For fifty years now, just about as long as I've been alive, my Mother and her  
cousin, Annmarie, have been knitting for charity.

They formed the *Needy Knitters Knitting Club* consisting of my Mother, her  
cousin, and several of their friends.

And these women knit leper bandages, as well as hats, blankets, and mittens for  
the poor. And they've never had to buy a stitch of yarn.

They find it in bags left on their porches. That's making an act of faith.

A few women who know that they can't change the world, but God can.

That's offering a barley loaf. That's offering a dried fish.

Years ago, Mother Theresa of Calcutta was honored by the United States congress, and  
Newt Gingrich, who was speaker of the house at the time, in his speech said something  
that I wrote down so I'd never forget it;

*“As a political body we are concerned with secular power; with military power, with financial power, with legislative power, but you have shown us a power that transcends that.*

*You have shown us, that one person willing to live what they believe can change the world.”* Not bad. He later converted to the Catholic faith.

We all have a barley loaf we can give to the Lord. We all have a dried fish.

We all have a gift or talent we can offer the Lord, so he can use it for others.

Maybe if we examine how much money we spend on ourselves, we can decide to sacrifice something, and increase our offering in the collection basket.

Maybe we can't. Maybe we're already giving what the extent of our financial limits will allow. That's OK. How about giving some time instead?

Volunteer to teach Religious Ed. Volunteer to bring communion to the sick.

Volunteer to help on a parish committee; Saint Vincent DePaul, Legion of Mary, Knights of Columbus, Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, the bazaar committee, Simon Ministry, the Pro-Life committee...

*(If you got a cause, we got a committee!)*

We are all part of the Lord's divine plan. The Lord has given us his sacraments, administered through his priesthood, to give us all of an abundance of his Grace.

Grace I've said many times before means "God's life within us."

When we receive a sacrament, especially the sacrament of the Eucharist, God dwells within us. And God dwells within us, so he can work through us.

But it's ultimately our choice. Like that little boy, it's up to us to step forward and offer the Lord what little gifts and talents we have.

And in offering that, we can watch the Lord take what little we have and multiply it to do wonderful things.

It is my prayer for all of us today, that when we approach the altar of the Lord, to receive the bread of life given to us from God, we may also bring to the altar the barley loaf of

our lives to give to him.